

No. 32. On the Creation.

Genesis 1st, Chap. 31st Verse.

And God saw every thing that He had made, and behold it was very good.

It is recorded of a certain ancient Philosopher, that he taught his disciples at the close of every day to examine themselves how they had employed it; that, if they had mispent their time, the reflection upon their abuse of it might make them more cautious for the future; or if they had made a proper use of it, they might with pleasure recollect the good they had done to themselves or others. An example of this sort God himself seems to give us in His great work of creation; for we find Him at the end of every day surveying His works—and in particular at the conclusion of the sixth day, when He had put the last hand to the noble fabric of the universe, He makes a general review of all his creatures, and finding them complete and perfect in their several kinds, gives His approbation of them in the words of the Text. And God saw every &c.

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When the Almighty is thus represented reviewing and contemplating the works of His hands, we are to understand this to be a way of speaking adapted to our narrow conception of things; a figurative manner of expression, alluding to the custom of men, who, after finishing a piece of workmanship, do consider it in all its parts, to try how they have succeeded in their attempts: for we are not to suppose that God was unacquainted with the goodness of His creatures, even before He spoke them into being. He, who gave them all their properties and perfections, must certainly have thoroughly understood their several natures and qualities. But, in the phrase of Scripture, when God is said to see or know a thing, is frequently meant, that He likes and approves of it; "God knoweth the way of the righteous;" so that when it is said God saw every thing that He had made, we are to understand this as a mark of His approbation of every creature, as answering the end for which he had created it—for it immediately follows "and behold! it was very good;"

not indeed absolutely and essentially so—but in a moral or natural sense:—and this goodness of all the creatures we shall readily acknowledge, if we consider them either separately and apart, or in general according to the relations they bear to one another. To this purpose, let us cast our eyes upon the works of each day of the creation. And should the review appear at first sight, more curious than useful, more entertaining than instructive; it will, notwithstanding, suggest to us many important and awful reflections.

The historian tells us that, “in the beginning, the earth was without form and void”—in a state of confusion and disorder—“and darkness was upon the face of the deep,” when God exerted His Almighty power, called forth light out of darkness, and separated and distinguished the one from the other. Light therefore was the production of the first day, the first effect of the Divine Power, and the first-born of his creatures. And how pleasant and useful, how necessary in all respects is light to us? It guides our steps and directs

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our motions—it refreshes the eyes and gladdens the heart—it cherishes all things by its heat, and is the vehicle that conveys to us the influences of the heavens. It is the light that supports the animals and invigorates the plants, that causes the flowers to blossom, which open when the Light appears, and incline their heads to the Sun as it were to do him homage. Light is a friend to piety and Religion; for whilst the wicked retire in obscurity to practise their vices, the virtuous and religious “come to the light that their deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.”

In all the visible creation there is nothing which approaches so near as this to the nature of God, nor is more proper to represent to us the felicity of the Blessed above, and the happiness of the saints on earth. Hence it is that in Scripture, God is styled “the Father of lights”—and His Son “the true Light, and the brightness of His glory”—the angels are called “Angels of light”—and the word of God is said to be, “a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths”—

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the Preachers of it are denominated "the light of the
"world"—the hearers, "children of light"—their
works, "the works of light"—and the inheritance re-
served for them in the heavens, "a kingdom of light."
Whatever is happy and successful is in the sacred writ-
tings represented to us under the notion of light; and,
on the contrary, every thing unfortunate, calamitous,
and horrible, is shadowed out by the name of darkness.

But let us proceed to consider the effects of Al-
mighty Power on the second day of the creation, in
which He ranged the four elements in their proper
order, assigning the lowest place to the earth, a firm
and solid body which is the common mother of all man-
kind—which receives us at our birth, supports and
feeds us during life, and after death takes the charge
of our bodies which are deposited in Her bosom, till
rising at the voice of the Arch-Angel this corruptible
mass shall put on incorruption, and this mortal, im-
mortality. The other elements are sometimes in arms
against us—the Air affrights us with storms—the

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Sea with its boisterous waves—and the Fire with thunders and lightning,—but the earth, still favourable and propitious, is incessantly bestowing her gifts upon us. She gives nourishment for our use to plants and animals, she regales our senses with grateful odours and pleasant tastes.

The sea, that collection of mighty waters, answers a great many wise and good ends. It sustains an infinite number of creatures of various kinds. It supplies the air with vapours, which, being suspended there for some time, fall down upon the earth in refreshing showers. It serves for a boundary to states and kingdoms, and a natural fortification to islands, and by means of It trade and commerce are maintained, and a correspondence kept up between the most distant parts of the Globe.

The Air, the next in order of the elements, is the receptacle of the winged race, the vehicle of light, the instrument of speech, sight, hearing, and smell; so necessary is it to us every moment of our lives, that with

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out it no cannot breathe nor subsist at all. It is
moreover the seat of the winds, which work our mills
and waft our ships over the seas; and besides this, by
the frequent motion and agitation which they occasion
in the air, keep it from corrupting and putrifying,
and serve, by an agreeable temperature, to allay the
excessive heats of it.

The uses of fire, the last of the four elements, are
too many to be here enumerated. It is, in a word,
the principle of life and motion, the cause of generation
and corruption; it gives heat and light; it purifies,
melts, softens or hardens metals, according to their dif-
ferent nature and texture—it is necessary in preparing
both meat and medicine, as well in working several
kinds of manufactures; it is the most pure and noble,
the most refined and active of all the elements; and
hence it is that God himself is styled "a consuming
fire;" and that He chose to appear to Moses under
the figure of a burning bush.

But what are these elements in comparison with

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those vast globes that roll over our heads, those heavenly bodies so wonderful for their magnitude and splendor, their influences and motions, their extent and duration: or what are even those beautiful emanations of Divine power and goodness, when, exalted on the wings of faith and hope, we raise ourselves to a higher stage, and reflect upon the glories of the third heavens, the seat and temple of eternity—that Jerusalem above the Abode of the Almighty—where, enthroned in light and splendor, He reigns and exercises an absolute dominion over all the creatures—where Angels adore Him—Seraphims surround His seat—the happy souls of good men behold Him face to face, and are transformed into His likeness; enjoying peace undisturbed, felicity uninterrupted, partakers of those transcendent pleasures, “which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the human heart to conceive?”

Upon the third day of the creation appeared the various productions of the earth, the plants and vege-

tables that adorn its surface, and the stones and minerals
 that are found within its bowels, all, in their several
 kinds, good and useful to man. The vegetables were
 our original, and are our natural food; some regale
 our senses with their sweet odours, and others delight
 our eyes with their surprising beauty—some of them
 help to clothe us, whilst others furnish us with wood for
 our furniture, and timber for the building of houses
 and ships, and afford us heat in winter and shade in
 summer. Nor ought we to forget the hidden qualities
 and medicinal virtues of the vegetable creation, which
 are so highly useful in the cure of distempers and ma-
 ladies that affect our bodies, and in restoring and pre-
 serving our health and vigour.

As to stones and minerals, they are to the earth,
 what the bones are to a human body, the Pillars to
 support and keep it up; and, not to enumerate their
 several qualities, are abundantly useful in the arts of
 civilized life.

Metals, by their natural virtues, are of service in

medicine—by their artificial, they are useful to the Laborer, the Soldier, and the Mechanic—by their civil—they become, when made into coin, the instruments of commerce. It seems unnecessary to mention the virtues of mineral waters, which are the last resort of Physicians, and cure numbers of maladies otherwise deemed incurable. Such is the goodness of the third day's creatures!

Upon the fourth, God made the stars to shine upon and enlighten the earth; and the principal of them, with respect to us, the Sun; which, to use the Psalmist's elegant allusion, "cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a Giant to run his course." 'Tis this grand Luminary that "separates the light from the darkness," that distinguishes the seasons, divides the year, and measures out time, that, at his approach banishes both night and cold, that, by his kindly heat, cherishes and enlivens all things. So likewise the moon, that "lesser light which God hath made to rule the night," helps us to divide our time

into weeks and months; affords us a useful light in the absence of the Sun, has a sensible effect upon all moist bodies, and, by reason of its nearer distance, contributes, in a greater degree than the Sun, to cause the flux and reflux of the Sea.

Let us now turn our eyes upon the several Animals, the work of the fifth and sixth days, whom God sent into the world, that the earth, the sea, and the heavens might have, each, their proper inhabitants; that there should not be wanting creatures capable of enjoying the light, and tasting the fruits of the earth—but especially were they created for the use and service of man, to whom, some of them are made the instruments of pleasure, others afford him ease in his labors and travels, some supply him with cloathing and raiment—others with food and medicine. Nor are there wanting in the animal creation examples and emblems of several virtues—thus the Serpent recommends to us prudence—the Dove, simplicity—the Bee is an emblem of frugality—the Ant of

diligence—the Turtle of conjugal love and fidelity.

We come now to consider the master-piece of the creation—God, having designed man for greater purposes than the rest of the animal world, gave him likewise a body of another make and structure, imprinted Majesty on his visage, furnished his hands with dexterity, gave him a tall upright stature, and taught him to look towards heaven. He infused into his body a spirit of different materials from that of the brutal race, an immortal, immaterial Soul, endowed with understanding and reason, stamped with the Image of his Creator, and made capable of knowing and loving Him. Nor was man furnished only with a mind to reflect upon the excellencies of the Deity; but the Almighty gave him likewise a mouth to recount and proclaim them to the world.

From this short review of the several creatures, we see how justly it may be affirmed of every one of them, Behold it is very good. And this will yet more fully appear, if we consider the mutual connection and

dependence of the several creatures, the relation they bear to one another, and how they all concur to make up one complete system of things. For as the beauty of a Palace does not consist so much in the choice of the materials, as in the proper structure and just arrangement of its parts; so likewise, however rich and grand the several materials of the Universe may be considered; yet the principal part of their beauty will be found to arise from the just assemblage and exact harmony discernable amongst them. Now when we consider the world in general, the first thing that excites our admiration is the surprising extent and incomprehensible greatness of it. The earth whereon we dwell, however large and capacious, is no more than a Point in comparison of the heavens, and much less than some of those stars which appear so small and almost imperceptible to our eyes; and if this be the case with the things that are visible and fall under the observation of our senses—what shall we think of those invisible things where God dwelleth in glory? "Who can count," says the Author

of Ecclesiastes, "the drops of rain, or the sand upon
 "the sea-shore?" "Tell the stars," says the Lord to
 Abraham, "if thou art able to number them." Who
 then can recount the numerous orders of spiritual sub-
 stances of which we are told that "thousand thousands
 "minister unto Him, and ten thousand 'times' ten
 "thousand stand before Him."

Let then the reflection upon the works of God, the
 wonderful operations of His hands, teach us to form to
 ourselves worthy notions of His majesty and grandeur.

Our most enlarged conceptions must needs fall
 infinitely short of His transcendent excellency—the con-
 templation of which will fill our souls and constitute
 our happiness through the endless ages of eternity—
 but the more exalted notions we entertain of the Deity,
 the more shall we be disposed to revere and adore Him
 here, and the better qualified for the enjoyment of His
 presence hereafter.

Let the reflection upon His extensive benevolence
 and unbounded goodness to us the Inhabitants of this

little Globe [inconsiderable indeed, compared with the numerous orbs and glorious worlds which we have reason to think are every where diffused, through the infinity of space] but yet sufficient to attract our regards and fix them upon the Almighty Framers of the Universe. Let the reflection on His goodness inspire us with the liveliest sense of gratitude, and exact all proper acknowledgements of His bounty. Let us employ our reason and understanding by which we are happily distinguished from, and made to preside over the inferior animals—in contemplating the amazing excellencies of our great and glorious, our wise and beneficent Creator. Let our tongues be employed in reciting His praises, in recounting the various instances of His mercies, to those who for want of capacity or attention, are apt too little to regard them. Let the dull and groveling mortals, who have set up their rest here, and prefer the glittering toys and perishing treasures of earth, to the substantial delights and incorruptible inheritance proposed to their expectations in heaven, be awakened by the power of

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our dejection to gladden their life and mean parents
and to enlarge their view, to lift up their eyes from
earth to Heaven, and dare to aspire after life and
immortality.

Let us above all be careful not only to admire and
celebrate, but as far as is possible for our finite and
limited capacities, to imitate the Divine Perfections,
to copy out in our lives, His holiness and goodness,
His truth, His justice and purity—for these His
moral perfections are the proper objects of our imita-
tion—we are required in this sense "to be perfect, as
our Father in Heaven is perfect."

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